

Living Church News

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Filled with Christ, Not Egypt

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We have some *excellent* articles in this issue about the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. All of us need to be preparing physically and spiritually for this annual memorial service. *All* of us need to be “examining” ourselves as Paul instructs in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

As we think about the Passover and about the original Days of Unleavened Bread, we remember that Israel was preparing to *flee Egypt*—a type of SIN. Likewise, we had better be preparing to flee modern Egypt in order to come out of sin. Yet when I have visited church brethren, I have often found that they—and *all of us at times*—still “enjoy” Egypt too much! Many still “feed” their minds and hearts NOT on God’s Word as much as they do on television programs, computer games, magazines, romance novels and other forms of diversion.

These things are usually FILLED with *this world’s* (Egypt’s) attitude toward romance, sex, marriage, child rearing, what to do when you are sick, violence, brutality, disrespect toward parents, teachers and nearly all in authority and, implicitly, disrespect toward GOD Himself.

In filling our minds with the messages and *approach to life* conveyed by this world’s print and electronic media, we are bombarding our brains with the attitude of spiritual Egypt and Babylon, which we are commanded to COME OUT of!

As this year’s Passover approaches, I urge all of you *in Jesus’ name* to cut WAY BACK on your exposure to this world’s media. And from my own hard-earned experience and suffering, I urge you NOT to allow your underage children to have their own private television sets, stereos or computers in their rooms, where you simply DO NOT KNOW—and some of you cannot even IMAGINE—the degree of violence, pornography and other filth they will be feeding their minds on!

Please do NOT think your children are somehow “better” and not susceptible to these powerful influences. Please HEED what I am saying or you may wake up someday and find that *your* teenagers are suddenly like “different persons”—having attitudes toward various aspects of life at TOTAL VARIANCE with everything you have tried to teach them. Yet, if you are honest, you may come to realize that the number of hours you spent teaching them was FAR surpassed by the number of hours they spent at the feet—so to speak—of the television “teacher”

or the often perversely violent and obscene computer sites and computer games.

It is vital that parents realize that young children are being exposed to these influences at increasingly younger and younger ages than you were. Their young minds, in fact their *entire spiritual outlook on life*, can be TWISTED, WARPED and POLLUTED by the rotten, garbage, which is being spewed out on our modern nations by Hollywood and its ilk. So please, for your *own good* and the good of your children and of their entire future, *examine yourselves*.

What is *your* home really like? What are the “patterns” of conduct and activities of *your* children? How much time and effort do you *really* put into teaching and training them, interacting with them and guiding them—with God’s help and through much prayer—to reflect the values of Jesus Christ? What are the kinds of entertainment *your* children expose themselves to? What kinds of GOALS do they have for their future?

Again, as we approach the Passover, how much do you genuinely ABHOR this modern Babylon that we all live in and yet are not to be part of? Remember Jesus’ final prayer for His disciples: “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:14–17).

If we zealously “feed” on Jesus Christ (John 6:57) through constant and earnest Bible study, meditation, prayer and fasting, then we will not be “of” this world even though we are still *in* it. We will then begin to *reflect Jesus Christ more* in everything we think, say and do. *Only* in this way can we truly overcome ourselves, this present evil world and Satan the Devil.

Brethren, if we are to be among the select group of people God uses to finish His Work, we are going to have to continually put forth a “second effort.” We need to rekindle the spiritual ZEAL many of us had at baptism. And we are going to have to make a more profound commitment to genuinely “walk with God” in *every phase and facet of our lives!*

Jesus Christ asked the rhetorical question, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find FAITH on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Most people in the Church of God today are exposing themselves so much to the influences and attitudes of this confused world that they simply CANNOT have the degree of clean, wholesome, Spirit-led FAITH that the original disciples of Jesus had.

I have actually seen people supposedly “studying” the Bible with the television set blaring away right in front of them! How *deep* was their concern to COME OUT of this world and FOCUS earnestly on the Kingdom of God? Remember the account of the Apostle Peter literally walking on the water toward Jesus Christ? Jesus was walking on the Sea of Galilee and, when first seeing Him, the disciples “cried out” for fear. “But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ And Peter answered Him and

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How Satan CONFUSES People

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Satan the Devil has many tactics to turn people away from God. He is, of course, the greatest LIAR in the universe. Jesus Christ told the Pharisees: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is NO TRUTH in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a LIAR and the father of it” (John 8:44).

As we seek to keep ourselves and loved ones from being overwhelmed by the satanic forces around us, it is vital that we fully grasp how Satan will try to influence us. He and his servants often simply tell *direct lies*. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s propaganda minister, reportedly said that if you tell a really BIG lie often enough, most people would believe it. So, without a regard for reason, Hitler and his ilk began to blame all of Germany’s woes on the “Jewish” bankers, the Jewish teachers, the Jews this and the Jews that. And even in Germany—proportionately the most highly educated nation on earth at that time—most people *believed it* or at least acquiesced to this monstrous LIE.

Today, we are told over and over that sexual perverts are “just like us,” that there is no difference that we should accept all kinds of moral deviates “just as they are.” The virtual *religion* of unquestioning tolerance is rapidly gaining ground. If

you and I speak out against abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage and other forms of perversion, we are immediately called intolerant. We are quickly judged to be right wing, ultra-conservative, religious fanatics who are so far out of sync with modern society that we should not even be allowed to speak.

Today, we are told that if a television show, book or movie is “just a little bit bad” then we should not worry about it. Yet, would we eat our apple pie with just a “little bit” of arsenic?

Think about it!

Brethren, we in God’s Church must continue to understand, and clarify in our own minds, the fact that the ONLY “standards,” the *only* “values” in life worth fighting for, are *God’s values!* All kinds of sophisticated books and articles are pouring forth nowadays, spewing out various opinions about high standards, true values and the like. Many of these books and articles have a few really good ideas. But, mixed in with the good is usually a lot of human reasoning and confusion. And, often, these sincere authors have to generalize about the values they are promoting, because they know in their own hearts that they really do not have a *complete set of values* that encompass every spectrum of human behavior.

But we do!

We, who truly believe that God inspired the Holy Bible, have a *permanent* and TOTAL set of values. For as we deeply study God’s Word, we find clearly defined laws, guidelines and principles that apply to virtually every human situation.

Though either ignored or disdained by most professing Christians, the Bible tells us *exactly* how husbands and wives ought to relate to each other and treat each other. Over and over, the Bible—in both instruction and example—reveals to us “God’s mind” on such issues as drunkenness, illicit sex of *any kind*, same-sex marriage, abortion, “cheating” on our income taxes, *lying*, even for a “good cause,” pornography, teenage violence and disrespect toward authority, etc.

The Bible is God’s complete Instruction Manual to mankind of all basic knowledge involving the Truth about right and wrong, the right way of life and the ultimate PURPOSE for human life. Speaking of the spiritual leaders of the Corinthian Church—those who were *deeply converted* and filled with the knowledge of God’s Word—Paul was inspired to write: “But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ *But we have the MIND of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:15–16).

Brethren, we will be made “fun” of and even *vilified* if we try to “prove” that principle to outsiders! For most of them—even most professing Christian ministers—will NOT surrender to let God’s Word literally RULE their lives. “Well, but this and that!” they say. But they will NOT humbly obey God’s commandments and His ways—and trust that GOD’S “values” are ALWAYS right. For even

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Lessons from the First Passover

By John H. Ogwyn

The events of the last two and a half centuries had been incredible. It all began about 1704BC when the 17-year-old son of Jacob and Rachel had been sold into slavery by his older brothers. Motivated by resentment and jealousy, they sold Joseph to Midianite slave traders who transported him to Egypt. Over the course of the next 20 years, events took an astounding turn. Young Joseph rose from being a slave to being the number two ruler of Egypt, right under Pharaoh himself.

The Pharaoh under whom Joseph achieved such prominence was from the newly arrived Hyksos dynasty. The Hyksos were Semites, a similar people to the family of Jacob. When a famine gripped all of the surrounding countries, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain and came face to face with the brother whom they believed was probably dead. By 1682BC, Jacob and his entire family of about 70 people came into Egypt. The Hyksos rulers, also known as the Shepherd Kings, showed Jacob's family of Hebrew shepherds great favor and provided them with land in Goshen, near the delta, to live and to raise their flocks.

For the next century or so things went very well for the family of Jacob. Their numbers multiplied and they were treated well. Just over 40 years after Joseph's death in 1611BC, the Hyksos were overthrown and expelled from Egypt by Dynasty XVIII of Thebes. The incoming ruler, Amose, is described as a Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph." He began systematically to oppress the burgeoning Israelite nation. By the time of Moses' birth, 44 years after the Hyksos expulsion, Israel had been reduced to the status of slaves. In fact, for a period of time, Pharaoh even sought to have all of the Israelite boy babies killed at birth in order to slow down their rapid population growth.

It was in this context that his parents, to protect him from death, hid the baby Moses. Pharaoh's daughter, Hatshepsut, discovered him in a basket in the edge of the Nile. Reared as a Prince of Egypt in the court of Thutmose I and Thutmose II, Moses achieved prominence. All the while, the condition of the people of Israel worsened further.

By the age of 40, Moses had made a decision to reject his Egyptian identity and to acknowledge his kinship

with the people of God. Forced to flee Egypt, he remained in the Sinai desert for the next 40 years, most of that time watching the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro. At the age of 80, the LORD manifested Himself to Moses through a burning bush, and sent him back to Egypt to begin his real life's work.

When Moses arrived back in Egypt, Thutmose III, who had sought his life, was dead and Amenhotep II was on the throne. The people of Israel had been ground down through several generations of slavery and had lost all hope. It was in this context, with a people who were in despair on the one hand, and an Egyptian ruler filled with pride on the other, that Moses was expected to accomplish a great work.

The subsequent events, which marked the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery and their journey toward Sinai to enter into a special covenant relationship with God, are the events of the first Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. These festivals, introduced when Israel was still in Egypt, mark the introduction of God's great plan of redemption and salvation. Contained in the circumstances surrounding the first Passover observance by Israel are many lessons for the people of God today. We will examine seven of those lessons.

We Cannot Save Ourselves

Life was overwhelming and it appeared that nothing could be done. Egypt was at its height as a major power and Israel was a disarmed, dispirited slave people. These were the circumstances in which God sent Moses to Pharaoh with the message of "Let My people go!" Pharaoh saw no reason why he should do such a thing and so God began to show him! Plague after plague was visited upon the land of Egypt, striking at everything in which they felt pride and confidence.

The tenth and final plague promised to be the most overwhelming of all. The LORD decreed that in one night the He would pass through the entire land of Egypt and every firstborn male in the land, both of people and animals, would be struck dead. Death was coming surely and

inexorably. There was only one way of escape. That way was for the people of Israel to take yearling lambs and at dusk, when the 14 day of the first month began, each household was to slay its lamb. The father in each home was to put the blood on the doorposts and the lamb was to be roasted and eaten during the evening.

Only those who were dwelling under the blood of the lamb would be “passed over” by the LORD and spared from death. The people could not protect themselves. Only the blood of the lamb, shed in their stead, could save them.

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 5:7 that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The first lesson we learn from the Passover is the impossibility of protecting ourselves from death, which is the consequence of sin. God took the initiative by providing the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Only by His blood can we be justified; made innocent, before God.

Resist Compromise

God did not spare His people from death so they could remain in Egypt as slaves. He wanted them to leave Egypt behind and come to serve Him. When Moses first went to Pharaoh with the request to let the Israelites go, he flatly refused. However, after several plagues, Pharaoh tried to strike a compromise.

First, Pharaoh suggested that rather than leaving Egypt, why did not Israel simply sacrifice to their God in the land (Exodus 8:25). This would never do, Moses said, because God’s commands were contrary to the customs and practices of the Egyptians. They must come all the way out of Egypt in order to serve God properly. A vital lesson for all of God’s people is the realization that God has called us to leave this world, with its ways and customs, behind us.

After yet more plagues, Pharaoh finally agreed to let the people leave Egypt. However, he insisted, only the adults could go. The children must stay behind. Moses flatly refused to compromise. Israel was not prepared to sacrifice its children to Pharaoh. God’s people must not abandon their children to the world around.

Finally, after three days of darkness throughout the land, Pharaoh once again called for Moses. All of your people can go, he told them, but leave the herds behind. “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” Moses declared (Exodus 10:26). There is never room to compromise regarding our response to God’s calling. We simply cannot serve God on the devil’s terms!

Have a Sense of Urgency

When the time finally came for God to deliver Israel, the people were told to eat of the Passover in a sense of readiness. They were to have their “loins girded” and their shoes on their feet. The Passover was to be eaten with unleavened bread, the bread of haste. God’s people were to have a sense of urgency about their calling.

What about us, do we take our calling for granted? Do we respond to God in a slow or casual manner? As the LORD passed through Egypt on the night of the first Passover, the people realized that it was a matter of life and death. They were eager and they were urgent.

When we come to grips with sin in our lives and truly see our need for a Savior, we also will have a sense of urgency. David likened his intense desire for God to a deep thirst (Psalm 42:1–2). Do we have an intense longing for a deeper relationship with the Father and with our Savior Jesus Christ? That intense desire will be accompanied by an earnest eagerness on our part. We need that sense of urgency in our own lives.

Resist Discouragement

During the daylight portion of Abib 14, the people gathered quickly together for their journey. Many of the treasures of Egypt were thrust upon them (Exodus 12:35–36). Finally, about sunset at the beginning of the fifteenth (Numbers 33:3; cf. Deuteronomy 16:1) the Israelites began their long march. They could scarcely contain their excitement as they came out “with a high hand.”

The excitement was short lived, however. Within a matter of days, Israel was encamped next to the Red Sea, partly hemmed in with mountains. Then the dust of Pharaoh’s chariots appeared upon the horizon. When the Israelites saw evidence of the advancing Egyptian army, they were frightened and deeply discouraged. “We would be better off to go back and be slaves than to die in the wilderness,” they cried.

One of the great battles we must fight, after beginning a life surrendered to God, is that of discouragement. There can be overwhelming obstacles that loom before us, along with frightening adversaries that rise against us. God allows us to find ourselves in situations that confront us with our utter powerlessness. He wants us operating under no illusions of self-sufficiency. We must learn to trust God and to depend upon Him in everything if we are to successfully complete our spiritual journey. When we find ourselves at our “Red Sea,” rather than being ready to give up and quit, just remember the admonition of Moses

to the people, “Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD” (Exodus 14:13).

Be Thankful

Probably the most prevalent of sins is ingratitude. It is very easy to take blessings for granted and wonder why there are not more. As Israel progressed in their journey out of Egyptian slavery, it would seem that they would be overwhelmed with thankfulness and appreciation for God’s deliverance. That, however, was not the case.

Shortly after crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites found themselves in a desolate wilderness area. Food and water were not available in the area to sustain them. Yet, clearly, God was working out a purpose in their lives. He had worked miracles to cause Pharaoh to let them leave Egypt. He had delivered their firstborn on the night of the Passover. Additionally, God had performed a tremendous miracle at the Red Sea to protect Israel from the Egyptian army and to ensure their freedom. In spite of all of this evidence of God’s watchful providence, they began to grumble and complain when they found themselves in the desert. They accused Moses of bringing them out there to kill them with hunger and thirst. They complained about how much better the living conditions had been in Egypt and how they always had plenty of food there (Exodus 16:3).

God met the needs of the people over and over throughout their journey, yet they remained unthankful and ungrateful most of the time. What about us? God has called us out of this world to enter into a special relationship with Him. Yet there are obstacles along the way, problems and difficulties that we must face in trying to live a life of obedience to the Creator. What is our attitude? Do we grumble and complain about the problems or are we thankful and appreciative for God’s calling and mercy? One of the main ways to resist discouragement and to walk with God in faith is to focus on counting our blessings. Continually thank and praise God for what He does.

Do Not Look Back

In Hebrews 11 we are told that Moses, when he reached maturity, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. We are told, in fact, that he *forsook* Egypt. While the whole Israelite nation left the land of Egypt, very few really *forsook* Egypt. To forsake means to turn away from and to reject.

As we look at the story of Israel’s journey, we see that the people looked back longingly time after time. When confronted by trials and difficulties along the pathway that God had chosen for them, they often talked about

“the good old days.” In truth, those days had not been very good, but memory can sometimes be quite selective.

Israel’s greatest problem, after leaving Egypt, was expressed by Stephen in Acts 7:39. Even though their feet left the land behind, **in their hearts** they turned back again! Israel had not ever truly forsaken Egypt in their hearts and this was reflected in a variety of incidents.

What about Christians today? The essence of the meaning of the Festival of Unleavened Bread is that God has called us to forsake the ways and values of this ungodly world. We are supposed to be engaged in a journey. Do we look back at the world that we have ostensibly forsaken and desire to hold on to it? The true answer to this question is reflected in the way we live. As men, does materialism govern your lives, or are you centered on the Work of God and on building godly lives and families? As women, do you reflect the modesty and true femininity that God values, or the decadent ways of a sensual and God-rejecting society? In order to achieve our calling and reach our destination, we must forsake Egypt in our hearts and not look back.

The Author and Finisher of Our Faith

Why does the Feast of Unleavened Bread have two holy days—one at the beginning and one at the end? The seven-day Feast of Tabernacles has only one holy day, which is at the beginning. Remember, the eighth day, the Last Great Day, is a completely separate festival.

The answer is perhaps most clearly stated in Hebrews 12, where we are told that Jesus Christ is both the *Author* and the *Finisher* of our faith. It took a miracle of God to start Israel on their journey out of Egypt, and it took another miracle, that of the Red Sea, to get them completely out of Egypt. Our successful completion of the journey out of sin, spiritual Egypt, will be accomplished **only** through the power of our Savior.

We need His help not only to start our journey, but also to sustain and finish it. The Passover season reminds us of our need for salvation and deliverance. It also reminds us that these are not objectives that we can accomplish by our own strength or might. We have One who goes before us in order to guarantee our success.

The theme of the Passover season is redemption and deliverance. God takes the initiative and we must respond. However, our human efforts will never be enough, and God knows that before we even start. We should learn lessons from Israel’s example in how to properly respond to God’s incredible love and mercy. The most important of these lessons is to not ever forget to look to the Author and Finisher of our faith. We must put our total confidence in Him, if we are to succeed in leaving Egypt behind and coming to the mountain of God. LCM

Look Out—I'm Offended!

How do you let go of anger? How do you forgive?

By Douglas S. Winnail

Do you ever get angry? Do you ever get so angry you want to scream, punch someone, break something or retaliate in some way? Do you find it hard to let go of your anger? Is it difficult for you to forgive someone who has hurt you—so difficult, in fact, that you never want to see the person again? Have you ever felt guilty because you realize you are holding onto anger and hurt feelings? If these issues are real to you, then you have plenty of company! A recent cover article in a leading news magazine stated we live in “A Mad, Mad World” where “rage of all kinds” is becoming commonplace, where increasing numbers of people are checking into anger-management workshops and seeking help controlling violent emotions (*Insight*, p.10, Jan. 3, 2000).

Unfortunately, Christians are not exempt from the powerful and negative effects of anger that damage relationships and destroy physical and mental health. Christians do, however, have access to very potent tools to help deal with the negative emotions of anger, bitterness, resentment and hurt. The Bible indicates that Christians are called to be overcomers (Revelation 3:12) who learn to live a different way of life as lights to the world (Matthew 5:14–16). Could you explain to someone how to forgive someone else—how you actually do it? Could you show someone how to let go of deep-seated, long-

standing anger? Have you learned to do this yourself? In this article we will examine what it means to forgive, how to deal effectively with anger. The Scriptures provide important keys and perspectives on the subject; so does modern research.

Anger—The Dangerous Emotion!

But some may ask what is so bad about anger—even God gets angry. The simple answer is that we are not God, and anger in human beings can lead to dangerous and destructive consequences—depending on the type of anger that is aroused. Anger is a strong feeling or emotion resulting from disagreement, being hurt or mistreated, or seeing something unjust happen. Not all anger is bad, but there are many types of anger that Christians simply cannot exhibit. Indignation is righteous anger at something evil, unjust or shameful. The Scriptures indicate this could be an appropriate response for a Christian (Ephesians 4:26). Wrath is a deep indignation with a desire to punish or get even. This is dangerous, even for Christians. Rage is a violent outburst of emotion in which self-control is lost. When you get furious, you experience overwhelming rage of a frenzied nature—you basically “lose it!” These last two types of anger are not only out of bounds for Christians, but outside the limits of decent civil behavior.

The Bible has long provided important lessons about the dangerous consequences of anger. In the Garden of Eden, God warned Cain that his anger could lead to problems (see Genesis 4:4–7). Instead of learning to deal with his anger, Cain sulked and nursed his anger until he finally vented his boiling emotion in an outburst of violence and hatred that killed his brother. Then, instead of acknowledging his sin and repenting, Cain slid into a state of denial and self-pity when he had to face the consequences of his own actions. Cain made a *series of choices* that illustrate very ineffective ways of dealing with anger—and he suffered painful consequences. We also read of Jacob's two sons, Simeon and Levi, who became very angry over an evil deed committed against their sister (see Genesis 34). They hatched a plot of mass murder and plunder to get revenge. In spite of their father's displeasure over their actions, *they felt totally justified* (Genesis 34:31). However, the Bible records God's final verdict about the cruel fruits of their “self-justified” anger—they *lost their inheritance* (Genesis 49:5–7). Anger is a very dangerous emotion!

The Bible and Anger

The life of Jesus Christ provides instructive examples of how to deal with anger—an emotion that God made us capable of experiencing and expressing. In the face of personal

insults, Jesus did not respond in kind or retaliate (1 Peter 2:23). However, when He saw the Pharisees' callous indifference to human suffering, Jesus was angered (He became righteously indignant) and healed a person (Mark 3:1–5). Overturning the tables of the moneychangers in the temple would have been another act of controlled, righteous indignation on Jesus' part, directed at their disregard of the sanctity of God's house of worship (Mark 11:15–17). During His rigged trial, in the face of false accusations and cruel insults, Jesus showed no anger and made no attempt to justify Himself, nor did He attempt to retaliate (see Matthew 26:59–63, 27:11–14, 27–31). Jesus remained calm and self-controlled. He trusted and lived by guidelines God inspired in the Scriptures.

Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21) and develop the very mind of God (Philippians 2:5–6). The Bible reveals that God is gracious [patient, forgiving] and **slow to anger** (Psalm 103:8). The quality of being slow to anger is extremely important to God (Proverbs 16:32). Learning to avoid angry responses defuses difficult situations, turns away wrath and avoids strife (Proverbs 15:1, 18, 17:14, 27). According to the Bible, *only fools* get into arguments and vent their angry emotions on others (Proverbs 18:6–7, 29:20; Ecclesiastes 7:9). The key to becoming slow to anger is *discretion*—developing wisdom and discernment (Proverbs 19:11). This vital quality enables us to deal more effectively with thoughtless, even malicious, actions of others. It also helps us develop patience and self-control when dealing with difficult situations.

Jesus studied the Scriptures from childhood (Luke 2:41–47). It is no surprise that His teachings reflect biblical guidelines. Jesus said “blessed are the merciful... [and] the peacemakers”

(Matthew 5:7–9). These are individuals who have learned how to avoid or overcome strife by controlling their human tendencies to get angry and wrathful. Jesus taught that harboring anger, hatred and giving in to name-calling was the spiritual equivalent of murder (Matthew 5:21–22). He admonished His followers to strive to settle differences quickly and avoid drawn-out disagreements that only foster hatred and bitterness (Matthew 5:23–25). He taught that Christians should not retaliate, but “do good” to those who treat them badly (Matthew 5:38–44). The perspective that makes this a wise course of action instead of foolishness is that God will ultimately take care of any injustices that may occur (Romans 12:17–21). Our challenge, as Christians, is to “live peaceably” with everyone with whom we come into contact.

When we repent and are baptized, we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). As we learn to use this powerful gift, we can become more patient, kind, gentle and self-controlled (Galatians 5:22–23). If we do not use, or fail to nourish and exercise the Holy Spirit, we will be prone to exhibit the normal human traits of “hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions” that characterize most angry exchanges between people (Galatians 5:19–20). Some assume that the scripture “Be angry and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26) allows for all kinds of anger. That simply is not true. Better translated, this verse implies “*if you get angry, beware lest you sin*” (see *The New Testament from 26 Translations*). Paul also warns, in the context of this scripture, that anger can give Satan a foothold in our lives and can grieve [limit the action of] the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:27–30). Anger, uncontrolled and of the wrong type, can hinder us from growing toward our goal—developing the mind of God—which involves

thinking calmly, clearly and being slow to anger. Christian behavior must be guided by biblical principles—not driven by angry feelings and emotions. But there is *another* important key to defusing anger.

Forgiveness—A Forgotten Key

The Bible speaks at length of a quality that is often ignored or overlooked in our modern, emotion-driven society. That is the quality of forgiveness. The Scriptures reveal that the God we worship and are to emulate is a forgiving God—that forgiveness is part of his nature (Psalm 86:5, 103; 105). The gospel Jesus preached emphasized that God is willing to forgive our sins (Acts 13:18). However, Jesus also taught that unless we are willing and able to forgive others, we would not be forgiven (Matthew 6:12–15). Christians must learn to forgive *from the heart*—completely, and without any strings attached (Matthew 18:21–35). The Apostle Paul warns that an unwillingness or inability to forgive, on our part, can give Satan a foothold in our lives, to wreak havoc with our relationships and damage our physical, mental and spiritual health (2 Corinthians 2:6–11). Failing to understand the importance of forgiveness is *asking for trouble!*

The Apostle John states that God will forgive us when we are able to see and acknowledge *our part* in problems (1 John 1:9–10). This requires that we get rid of angry, self-justifying emotions that blind us to our own faults. John, reflecting the teachings of Jesus, warns that if we harbor hatred and bitterness against our brothers and sisters, we deceive ourselves and are not acting as Christians (1 John 2:9–11). Our challenge, as Christians, is to be loving, patient, understanding and forgiving. We must be willing to “lay

down our lives” for others—willing to put aside our own angry emotions for the purpose of bringing peace (1 John 3:16–23). Forgiveness is a vital aspect of loving one another that our society is forgetting today!

To Forgive Is Divine?

Daniel wrote “to the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness” (Daniel 9:9). This may be the source of the idea that “to err is human, to forgive is Divine.” This implies that only God is able to forgive; human beings cannot be expected to act in such a manner. However, as we have seen, the Bible clearly teaches that we must *learn to forgive*. This requires an understanding of what it means to forgive someone. Forgiveness is learned through relationships. It is not something we learn off in a corner by ourselves. When we forgive from the heart, we also experience certain benefits. We feel a sense of calm and relief that dampens the desire to lash out and retaliate. We get over the mental turbulence that unforgiven hurts create. Forgiveness is learned through practice.

When we are hurt or offended, we have a choice of responses we can make—just like Cain. We can erect barriers of self-protection, become defensive and retaliate. We can avoid or ignore the offending person. We can gossip about the other person’s faults and seek people who will agree that we have been wronged. We can tell ourselves (self-talk) how bad or wrong the other person is and replay these thoughts endlessly—reinforcing our anger and hurt. *Or we can choose to forgive*—because forgiveness is also a human prerogative! However, the choice to forgive will take courage, conviction, compassion and commitment. It will also require knowledge of what forgiveness actually involves.

Forgiveness has two parts: (1) letting go of anger, and (2) making

Moral Reasoning Levels

1. **Revengeful forgiveness** – only if offender is punished and experiences pain
2. **Restitutive forgiveness** – only if guilt is admitted and apologies are made
3. **Expectational forgiveness** – forgiving in response to social pressure
4. **Lawful forgiveness** – forgiving due to moral or religious pressure
5. **Social forgiveness** – forgiving to gain social harmony and restore relationships
6. **Forgiveness as love** – forgiving is unconditional, no preconditions or expectations (see *To Forgive is Human*, pp. 44–47)

Real Christians will grow toward higher levels in their moral reasoning ability.

an effort to restore and rebuild relationships. For many of us, we think we have forgiven someone when we decide not to retaliate. But we never really let go of the underlying anger and we continue to avoid the offending person and make no effort to rebuild anything. This is not real forgiveness. We are only kidding ourselves that we have forgiven. Letting go of anger involves overcoming the desire to retaliate, ignore and avoid someone. Rebuilding a relationship involves being willing to talk things over, cooperate with and begin to speak well of the other person. Real forgiveness is difficult because it *involves making changes in who we are and changing how we respond to others*. Real forgiveness “requires a fundamental change of heart—a turning from old ways... If we are to learn to forgive, most of us must repent of the strategies that we use to cope with our hurts and our insistence on obtaining revenge (*To Forgive is Human*, McCullough, Sandage &

Washington, pp. 75–76, 1997). To forgive from the heart requires a real change of heart—which is what Christian conversion is all about.

Learning to forgive also requires that we *grow* in our moral reasoning ability (see box on Moral Reasoning Levels). The Apostle Paul writes, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). As Christians, we are admonished to grow in the knowledge of how God wants us to act (2 Peter 3:18). Forgiveness not only involves recognizing and overcoming our own negative tendencies to retaliate in anger, but learning how to promote positive relationships with those who have hurt us. This will be a challenge, but it is easier than you might think. Knowledge of what it really means to forgive is important. Following biblical guidelines and asking God for the help of His Spirit

are also vital steps to take. But how do you get rid of chronic anger?

Dealing with Anger

Anger is a powerful emotion that involves the mind, body and *behavioral habits* we have acquired over a lifetime. Overcoming anger will involve taking steps to rearrange our thinking. We must learn to identify situations, perceptions and interpretations that generate anger in us and learn new habits and skills that reduce anger (see box on Dealing with Anger). To deal effectively with chronic anger and let go of hurt feelings we will have to change how we perceive offenses and how we react to offenses. One key is *learning to empathize*—trying to understand where the other person is coming from, and why they might have said or done something that hurt you. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Instead of jumping to conclusions, accusing and pointing the finger, try to understand what might have led to his or her actions. Maybe they had no evil or ulterior intentions at all. Maybe you have over-reacted and assigned blame prematurely and erroneously. If we learn to calmly act and think in this manner, we may find, in many situations, that our anger is unwarranted and letting go of anger will become easier. If we can empathize, it will also be easier to forgive.

Steps to Managing Anger

1. *Analyze* what makes you angry and how you handle it. Look for better ways to handle situations that provoke you to anger. Find good role models. Focus on dealing with the situation, not on

accusing or avoiding the other person.

2. Anger is fomented and maintained by statements we make to ourselves (self-talk) and to other people about our problem. *Learn to control your anger by reinterpreting* the supposed provocation (“I’m sure they did not mean it in a negative way”; “they must have had a bad day, etc.”). *This is how people who are slow to anger do it—they empathize* and try to find possible reasons why the other people acted as they did. These new attitudes reduce the arousal of anger by removing the perception of being attacked. This method puts you in control of the situation, instead of reacting to it.

3. Use positive self-talk. Think, “stay cool; getting angry will not help this situation.” Stay focused on the issue, not the other person's faults. Avoid inflammatory words that add to your anger and irritate others. Look for humor in difficult situations. Humor is calming. It defuses tense situations and is a sign of reconciliation.

This article is not meant to be a “lift yourself up by your own boot-

straps” attempt to solve all your problems. The point is to show there are sound principles in the Bible that can help deal with anger that is destructive to relationships and debilitating to our health. There are also practical skills that can be learned and developed through practice that will make forgiveness much easier than it may be for you at the moment. The next time you feel offended, think about your own need to be forgiven. It will motivate you to be forgiving. Remember that forgiveness has two parts: letting go of anger, and being willing to work at promoting better relationships. Make a real effort to empathize with the other person and try to understand where he or she may be coming from. How we react to offenses involves choices we make on our part. Make a conscious choice to honor and obey God by learning how to really forgive and to let go of angry emotions that only aggravate, but do not solve, our problems. LCN

Dealing with Anger

Anger-Arousing Perceptions

Injustice: “it is not fair” vs
Blaming: “it is your fault” vs
“You are not treating me right” vs
“I deserve better than this” vs
Shattered expectations vs
Shattered belief in a just world vs

Anger-Intensifying Habits:

Yelling, sulking, pouting vs
Plotting revenge, arguing vs
Accusations (“you never...”) vs

Anger-Reducing Perceptions

“Bad things often happen”
“What part do I play in the problem?”
“Maybe they see things differently”
“How can I be an example?”
Empathy for other person
Humor, learn to laugh at difficulties

Cooling-Off Habits:

Count to 10, sleep on it, exercise
Do not yell, sulk, pout, or argue
Go see a movie, take a walk

Focus on positive aspects of others (see *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, Travis 1989, p. 289)

Real Christians will grow and begin to replace anger-arousing behaviors with behaviors and habits that reduce or eliminate angry emotional reactions. This requires us to change how we think and perceive.

The Hebrew Calendar and God's Church

By John H. Ogwyn

In the last decade, the Church has seen increasing controversy about its use of the Hebrew calendar to celebrate God's commanded Holy Days. Historically the Church has used the calendar preserved by the Jewish community. Some have contended that the Jews have not properly preserved the calendar, and have altered it by human tradition since the time of Jesus and the Apostles. Is this true? Do we have a Biblical basis for concluding that the calendar we now use is substantially the same as that used by Jesus and the Apostles?

Faced with this issue many years ago, Mr. Herbert Armstrong concluded that Romans 3:1–3 showed that the calendar, along with the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, was among the oracles of God. As such, he concluded, the Church should use the same calendar that the Jews had preserved, including its “postponements”—the four rules that determine which day should be proclaimed as the first day of Tishri, the date from which all other days of the year are calculated. In recent years, however, some critics have asserted that the postponements represent a fourth-century rabbinical invention, and were not used at the time of the Apostolic Church.

In years past, the Church has published several articles explaining the basic principles and workings of the calendar. This brief article does not seek to duplicate that information, but is simply meant to answer the question of whether or not we can prove that the current calendar rules, including postponements, were in use during the time of Christ. The answer is that we can! Here is how.

From the Bible we can clearly prove that for Jesus to be in the tomb three days and three nights as He said, the crucifixion must have been on a Wednesday. Clearly then, whatever year Christ was crucified must have been one in which Passover came on a Wednesday and the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the High Day Sabbath of John 19:31) occurred on a Thursday. During the range of years that are possible for the crucifixion to have taken place, only two could have had Wednesday Passovers. One is 30AD, when the Passover would have fallen normally on a Wednesday. The other is 31AD, in which Passover would only have been on Wednesday if the current rules of the Jewish calendar (including the postponement rules) had been in effect. Can we know for sure when the crucifixion occurred?

The answer is a resounding “yes”—and the key is contained in scripture. In Daniel 9, the prophet recorded that 70 “sevens” (literal Hebrew) were determined upon

the people of God. From the going forth of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah, the Prince, should come, would be 69 weeks. The Messiah would be cut off in the midst of the 70th week. This prophecy of a three-and-a-half year ministry is confirmed by a careful study of the gospel accounts.

Christ was crucified in the spring, so His ministry must have begun in the fall to accommodate the half-year. If Christ was crucified in 31AD, He was baptized by John the Baptist in the fall of 27AD. But if He were crucified in 30AD, He would have been baptized in the fall of 26AD. Which was it?

The 69 prophetic weeks from the decree until the Messiah's appearance would equal 483 years. The decree was the one recorded in Ezra 7 issued by Artaxerxes in his seventh year and delivered to Jerusalem by Ezra in the fifth month of that year. So the question is simple, **when was the seventh year of Artaxerxes?**

A reliable source for dating the reign of Artaxerxes is a book entitled *Babylonian Chronology 626 B. C. to A. D. 75* (Parker and Dubberstein, Brown University Press) which is based upon translations of ancient Babylonian documents and inscriptions. This book clearly dates the accession of Artaxerxes after the death of his predecessor, Xerxes, in 464BC. After taking the throne in July-August of 464BC, Artaxerxes completed his “accession year”—also credited as the final year of Xerxes' reign—then in the fall of 464BC began the first year credited to his own reign. We should note that the vast majority of credible extra-Biblical scholarship agrees with this 464BC date. To accept any other date introduces problems with other aspects of historiography, so we can comfortably accept this date, agreed upon by scholars who have no agendas in the calendar and postponements controversies.

To find the end-date of the 69 weeks prophecy, we must understand whether the Biblical account figured the years of Artaxerxes using a spring-to-spring reckoning or a fall-to-fall reckoning. If figured spring-to-spring, then Artaxerxes' first year began in April of 464 and ended in April of 463. His seventh year would have been from the spring of 458 to the spring of 457. This would mean that Ezra brought the decree in the late summer of 458BC. The 69 prophetic “weeks” would thus end in 26AD.

Spring-to-spring reckoning was the standard practice in Babylon. In ancient times, some nations started their new

The Hebrew Calendar
continues on page 21

Lessons from the Red Sea

By Mark Mendiola

Ihe miraculous parting of the Red Sea has inspired generations. Cecil B. DeMille's portrayal of it in the classic movie "The Ten Commandments" remains one of the most memorable special effects ever shown on the silver screen. Who can forget Charlton Heston's portrayal of Moses and the awe-inspiring sight of the Red Sea's waters dividing as the terrified Israelites witnessed Pharaoh's chariots charging upon them?

Hollywood succeeded in giving us a glimpse of what it might have been like for the Israelites. But even those depictions of this famous Biblical event fail to vividly capture how truly breathtaking and spectacular it must have been! It was so stupendous that references to it are recorded throughout the Holy Bible.

It was such a momentous event that even the founding fathers of the United States contemplated using its imagery in the fledgling nation's official emblems. They recognized its profound importance more than 200 years ago. In 1776, Benjamin Franklin proposed to the Continental Congress that the great seal of the U.S. bear the image of Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea. Thomas Jefferson also urged that an Israel led through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and fire represent the new nation.

The story of the Exodus remains one of the most encouraging events ever recorded, and the parting of the Red Sea holds special meaning for Christians today. Its lessons are as applicable in the New Testament.

Scholars generally concede 1 Corinthians was written at the time of the Days of Unleavened Bread. The Apostle Paul urged that the old leaven be purged out because Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). He said, "let us keep the feast," referring to the Days of Unleavened Bread (v. 8). He explained how to properly partake of the bread and wine during the Passover service (1 Corinthians 11:20-30).

In this same epistle, Paul refers directly to the parting of the Red Sea as a fact, not a myth or legend, as is widely supposed today. "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

The Apostle Paul confirms that all of Israel passed through the Red Sea and that crossing it was like a baptism. Coming out of Egypt symbolized coming out of sin. The drowning of the Egyptians was like our sins being washed away and the burial of our old selves at baptism.

"All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (vv. 3-4).

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, the LORD, the Eternal. He was the Ever-Living One who parted the Red Sea for Israel. The parting of the Red Sea is not irrelevant for New Testament Christians. It carries significance for us even today; lessons we dare not forget!

Calculating the timing and distance traveled by the Israelites as recorded in the Book of Exodus, some authorities have concluded this dramatic display of God's power occurred on the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread. It followed the start of Israel's departure from Egypt a week earlier on the night of the 15th of Nisan, the beginning of the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

The Jewish historian Josephus confirms their departure date in *The Antiquities of the Jews*: "They left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt" (*Antiquities*, Book 2:15:2).

The number seven denotes completion. The parting of the Red Sea on the Seventh Day of Unleavened

Bread marked Israel's complete removal from Egypt or sin.

"Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, 'Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?' So he made ready (or harnessed) his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them" (Exodus 14:5–7).

Josephus wrote that Pharaoh thought the Israelites could be easily overcome because they had no armor and would be weary from their journey because the land was difficult to travel, not only for armies but also individuals (*Antiquities* 2:15:3). Josephus' writings are not scripture, but they often give us an insight into details not always expounded by the Bible.

Josephus records that not only did Pharaoh have 600 chariots, but he also had 50,000 horsemen and 200,000 footmen, all armed! (*Antiquities* 2:15:3). We can imagine the sight of this massive army bearing down on Israel, and how frightening that must have been.

"And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness" (Exodus 14:8). Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to explain that not only was Egypt a type of sin, but Moses was a type of Jesus Christ; Israel was like the Church of God; Pharaoh was like Satan, and his soldiers were like demons. "And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD" (v. 10).

The Israelites were trapped between two mountain ridges on

their sides, the Red Sea in front and the massive Egyptian army rapidly rushing upon them. Put yourself in their sandals. How would you have reacted? "Then they said to Moses, 'Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, "Let us

people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace'" (Exodus 14:13–14).

This is an important lesson for us. When our backs are against the wall, and we are at wits' end after

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, the LORD, the Eternal. He was the Ever-Living One who parted the Red Sea for Israel. The parting of the Red Sea is not irrelevant for New Testament Christians.

alone that we may serve the Egyptians?" For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness" (vv. 11–12).

The Israelites had completely forgotten all of the miracles and plagues God used to bring them out of Egypt. Josephus tells us that this is where the Israelites first took up rocks to stone Moses and even threw them at him because they were so distraught. He wrote, "So they laid the blame on Moses, and forgot all the signs that had been wrought by God for the recovery of their freedom; and this so far, that their incredulity prompted them to throw stones at the prophet, while he encouraged them and promised them deliverance; and they resolved that they would deliver themselves up to the Egyptians" (*Antiquities* 2:15:4). In other words, they were ready to surrender!

Moses tried to encourage the Israelites and reassured them of God's power to divinely deliver or rescue them. "And Moses said to the

doing all we can, God will fight our battles for us. We must make sure we are not afraid. We must patiently wait for Him to save or deliver us. And remember that He has tremendous power at His disposal to do it!

"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward' (Exodus 14:15). God wants us to keep progressing. He is not pleased with anyone who draws back and turns tail. "But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen" (vv. 16–18).

There is some debate over whether Pharaoh was actually drowned with the Egyptian soldiers,

Local Church Listings

This is the first of a twice-a-year insert containing Living Church of God local church listings. It has been printed in bigger type for easier reading, and lists the regional or area pastor responsible for each video group. These men should have the most current information about local services within their respective areas. Members may also call San Diego headquarters (858-673-7470) for church information, or send e-mail to cad@cogl.org.

These local church listings will be inserted into the *Living Church News* before the spring and fall Holy Days.

AUSTRALIA

Canberra	ACT	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346
Dubbo	NSW	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346
Newcastle	NSW	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346
Brisbane	QLD	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346
Adelaide	SA	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346
Melbourne	VIC	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346
Perth	WA	Bruce Tyler	.011-61-7-3841-8346

BARBADOS

Christ Church	Jonathan McNair225-654-6797
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BELIZE

Belmopan	Jonathan McNair225-654-6797
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CANADA

Calgary	AB	Charles Bryce905-276-9729
Edmonton	AB	Charles Bryce905-276-9729
Kelowna	BC	Charles Bryce	.....905-276-9729
Vancouver	BC	Charles Bryce	.....905-276-9729
Winnipeg	MB	Eng Monson	.....306-545-5250
Fredericton	NB	James Arnaldo	.....508-393-6209
Sussex	NB	James Arnaldo	.....508-393-6209
St Johns	NF	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Woodstock/			
Springdale	NF	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Halifax	NS	James Arnaldo	.....508-393-6209
Bracebridge	ON	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Guelph	ON	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Kingston	ON	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Ottawa	ON	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Peterborough	ON	Frank Best	.....905-845-7922
Fort Francis	ON	Eng Monson	.....306-545-5250
Toronto	ON	Charles Bryce	.....905-276-9729
Montreal	QC	Jacques Secours	.....450-623-5002

Quebec City	QC	Jacques Secours	.....450-623-5002
Prince Albert	SK	Eng Monson	.....306-545-5250
Regina	SK	Eng Monson	.....306-545-5250
Saskatoon	SK	Eng Monson	.....306-545-5250
Yorkton	SK	Eng Monson306-545-5250

CHILE

Santiago	Mario Hernandez858-673-7470
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COLOMBIA

Manizales	Mario Hernandez858-673-7470
Medellin	Mario Hernandez858-673-7470
Santa Fe De Bogota	Mario Hernandez858-673-7470

COSTA RICA

Santa Ana	Jorge Schaubek	...011-506-282-6280
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FRANCE

Paris	Dibar Apartian858-673-7470
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GERMANY

Karlsruhe	Dibar Apartian858-673-7470
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GUATEMALA

Coatepeque	Rocael Balda	...011-502-775-2126
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GUYANA

Aishalton	Jonathan McNair225-654-6797
Awarewaunau	Jonathan McNair225-654-6797
Georgetown	Jonathan McNair	.....225-654-6797
Lethem	Jonathan McNair225-654-6797

IRELAND

Dublin	Dibar Apartian858-673-7470
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JAMAICA

Kingston	Jonathan McNair225-654-6797
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KENYA

Nairobi	Ernest Owino011-02-340-540
Ndhiwa	Ernest Owino011-02-340-540
Sultan Hamud	Ernest Owino	....011-02-340-540

MALAYSIA

Bahau Rajan Moses . . .011-603-930-1187
 Kuala Lumpur Rajan Moses . . .011-603-930-1187

MEXICO

Guadalajara Mario Hernandez858-673-7470
 Mexico City Mario Hernandez858-673-7470
 Queretaro Mario Hernandez858-673-7470

MYANMAR

Ka Lay Myo **Bruce Tyler** . .011-61-7-3841-8346
 Sa Khan Gyi **Bruce Tyler** . .011-61-7-3841-8346

NETHERLANDS

Stramproy **Dibar Apartian**858-673-7470

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland Kinnear Penman . .011-64-9-435-2558
 Palmerston North Kinnear Penman . .011-64-9-435-2558

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Maprik **Bruce Tyler** . .011-61-7-3841-8346
 Wewak **Bruce Tyler** . .011-61-7-3841-8346

PHILIPPINES

Baguio City **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Bogabongan **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Cagayan De Oro **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Cateel **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Cavite **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Davao City **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 "Don Carlos, Bukidnon" **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 General Santos City **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Iligan City, Lanao Del Norte **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Koronadal Proper **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Lilo-An **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Makilala **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Maranding **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Mauswagon **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Monkayo **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Nabunturan **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Quezon City **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 San Fernando **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 San Nicolas **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Sindangan **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538
 Tacloban **Rod McNair** . . .011-63-2-813-6538

PORTUGAL

Maceira Liz Joaquim Francisco351-044-777669

PUERTO RICO

San Juan Benjamin Faulkner813-684-1423

SINGAPORE

Singapore **Bruce Tyler** . .011-61-7-3841-8346

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town **Syd Hull** . .011-27-11-664-6036
 Johannesburg **Syd Hull** . .011-27-11-664-6036
 Nelspruit **Syd Hull** . .011-27-11-664-6036
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Gladespring	VA	Val Burgett	540-726-8020	Wheatland	WY	Ben Whitfield	307-324-7931

but this verse and others strongly imply that he was destroyed, like so many of Egypt's false gods. In a sense, the collapse of the Red Sea on the Egyptians was the culmination of God's divine plagues against Egypt.

The Egyptians worshiped Pharaoh as a god. They worshiped the Nile River, which God turned to blood. They worshiped the sun, which God blacked out for three days. They worshipped cattle, which God also cursed. God left no doubt that He was the only true, living God!

The parting of the Red Sea was such an overwhelmingly miraculous event that it is referred to repeatedly in the Psalms and was frequently sung about.

The psalmist urges that thanks be given "to Him who divided the Red Sea in two, and made Israel pass through the midst of it, but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea" (Psalm 136:13–15). These verses single out Pharaoh as being overthrown with his army in the Red Sea. "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen" (Exodus 14:21–23).

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots and on their horsemen.' And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in

the midst of the sea. Then the water returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained" (vv. 26–28).

Josephus writes: "As soon, therefore, as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind, and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunderbolts also were darted upon them" (*Antiquities* 2:16:3).

The Psalms confirm there was thunder, lightning and even earthquakes that accompanied this destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. "The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were afraid; the depths also trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about. The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook. Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps were not known. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psalm 77:16–20).

Not only did the walls of the Red Sea come crashing down on the Egyptians, there was a downpour from the clouds, spectacular lightning and booming thunder. Strong earthquakes shook the ground. There was no doubt that God Himself was directly involved.

"So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses" (Exodus 14:30–31).

There are many people who mock this parting of the Red Sea happening as the Bible describes. Many call it mythology or a metaphor. Many Bible commentaries claim the Israelites only crossed a marshy area filled with reeds, denying that it occurred at the Red Sea. The scholars cannot believe that God could perform such an incredible miracle. Yet, the Bible explicitly says the waters were deep.

The Israelites were exultant when they were delivered and reached the other side of the Red Sea. They composed what we call the "Song of Moses." It became sort of a national anthem for them. Throughout it are references to the Red Sea's depth and the waters immersing the Egyptians.

The song or anthem states: "Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; his chosen captains also drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone" (Exodus 15:4–5). "And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright like a heap and the depths congealed in the heart of the sea" (v. 8). "You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters" (v. 10). "You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them" (v. 12).

This does not sound like the description of a shallow, marshy area, contrary to what doubting scholars might believe! As if God knew people would not believe the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea during Moses' time, He also dried up the Jordan River for the Israelites to cross under Joshua's leadership. You cannot, by any stretch, call the Jordan River a shallow, marshy area. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant into Jordan when it was overflowing its banks during harvest time. It says in Joshua 3:14–17 the

waters that came from upstream stood still and rose in a heap, like the Red Sea. They normally flowed into the Salt Sea or Dead Sea, but failed and were cut off.

“Then you shall let your children know, saying, ‘Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land’; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever” (Joshua 4:22–24).

At Mount Sinai, God told Moses to remind the Israelites what He did to the Egyptians and how He bore them on eagle’s wings even though they had to march out of Egypt on foot (Exodus 19:4). The founding fathers of the United States ultimately agreed to emblazon the eagle on the national seal of the United States.

In Revelation 12, we read that Satan will unleash a massive attack against God’s Church similar to Pharaoh’s assault on the Israelites. Just as Pharaoh chased the Israelites into the wilderness, Satan will chase some members of God’s Church into the wilderness, “but the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place...” (vv. 13–14).

“So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth” (vv. 15–16).

Water, symbolically, in the Bible, can refer to Gentile armies (Jeremiah 46:7–9, Isaiah 8:7–8, Revelation 17:15) like the Egyptians who pursued Israel. Just as the Song of Moses

was composed after the Israelites were rescued from the Egyptians, and psalms were sung to commemorate the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, the Song of Moses will once again be sung in the future, but this time with the Song of the Lamb. Those who gain victory over the coming European war power, just as the Israelites were victorious over Pharaoh and his armies, will sing it.

The Israelites had seen with their own eyes the fantastic miracle of the Red Sea’s parting, and walked through it with a high wall of water on each side. They had witnessed the plagues poured out on Egypt. Yet, they forgot the mighty works of God.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, after referring to the Israelites passing through the Red

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape.

“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name? For You alone are holy. For all the nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested” (Revelation 15:3–4).

The Song of Moses concludes with “The LORD shall reign forever and ever,” alluding to Christ’s Kingdom ruling over the nations (Exodus 15:18). That will be our Promised Land.

One of the greatest lessons of the parting of the Red Sea is that our God is a God of incredible, miraculous power! After the Israelites crossed to the opposite shore of the Red Sea, however, they allowed unbelief to cause them to depart from God and were hardened by sin. As a result, they were not permitted to enter the Promised Land and died in the wilderness.

Sea, the Apostle Paul observed: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.... No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:11, 13).

These incidents recorded in the Holy Bible are examples written for our instruction even at the very end of this age. During the Days of Unleavened Bread, the lesson of the Red Sea’s parting holds special meaning. We dare not fear what men can do to us or doubt Almighty God’s awesome power. Rather, let us stand our ground and see the salvation of the Eternal. He is the One who fights our battles for us when we have done all we can to completely come out of the sin that so easily besets us! ☐

DID JESUS BREAK THE LAW?

By Dexter B. Wakefield

They had figured out the perfect no-win situation for Jesus. In the past the scribes and Pharisees had come up with seemingly fool-proof questions that would trap Jesus in His own words, and repeatedly He had turned the tables on them. But this time it was going to be different. Either way Jesus answered the question, they had Him. If He answered “Yes,” He would appear mean-spirited and would offend much of Jerusalem. If He answered “No,” they would accuse Him of defying the law and God. It was going to be win-win for them and no-win for Jesus.

Pick up the story in John 8:2: “Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, *in the very act*. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.’ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’” (John 8:2–12).

Leviticus 20:10 states, “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” Also, one of the Ten Commandments prohibits adultery, (Exodus 20:14) and adultery is called a sin in both the Old and New Testaments. Some say that this incident proves that Jesus

broke the civil law of Israel—or at least advocated ignoring it—and dismissed one of the commandments. They reason that Jesus did all this in an effort to be merciful in a case where He considered His Father’s law to be too harsh. But is that what really happened?

Magnifying the Law

Jesus specifically said that He did not come to do away with His Father’s law—rather, He came to magnify it: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17–20).

The apostle John wrote, “sin is the transgression of the law,” (1 John 3:4, KJV) and the Bible teaches us that our salvation depends on the fact that Jesus was a sinless sacrifice for our sins. Hebrews 9:28 makes this clear, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time *without sin unto salvation*.” According to your Bible, Jesus “...was in all points tempted as we are, yet *without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). If Jesus broke the law, the scriptural account of His role as a sinless sacrifice is false, and to reject His Father’s law implies an act of rebellion. Also, some reason that if Jesus could overlook the law whenever He wanted, they can too. This kind of thinking operates to deceive people into believing that they can reject what God says is right and wrong and decide for themselves. So whether or not Jesus broke the law is of great importance to us.

Is there more going on in this story than meets the eye? There certainly is, but it is necessary to have some additional information on the legalities and circum-

stances involved before we can understand why Jesus said the things recounted in this incident.

The first odd circumstance presented in this account is the fact that the scribes and Pharisees brought only a woman taken in the act of adultery. Where is the man? The scripture quoted above states, "...the adulterer *and* the adulteress, shall surely be put to death." Why did they let him go? Also, adultery is a sin committed in privacy. How could a whole group of pious scribes and Pharisees be eyewitnesses to such an act if they had not arranged to be? Many times, Jesus said to these people, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matthew 23:13). There is a real possibility that this woman was entrapped in an effort to entrap Jesus.

Rules of Evidence Provided Balance

Adultery was a grievous spiritual sin (Exodus 20:14) and a capital crime, for which the Israelite law called for death if the person was convicted. And regardless of unfair circumstances, this woman apparently did what she was accused of. In Israelite law a number of offenses existed that could result in a death sentence, and these penalties might seem harsh by today's standards. But it is important to realize that Israelite rules of evidence were so strict that it was extremely difficult to convict anyone. This added balance to the system.

Several conditions were necessary before a person could be convicted and executed.

There had to be two or more witnesses. "Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses, he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness" (Deuteronomy 17:6). This is why it was necessary for the scribes and Pharisees to present a crowd of eyewitnesses to the adultery. It is also why it was extremely rare for anyone ever to be executed. In contrast, most modern systems will convict a person of a capital crime on the testimony of one witness and often on forensic evidence alone. Because people had little fear of punishment, adultery was so common in Jesus' time that He called them "...'An evil and adulterous generation...'" (Matthew 12:39). The scribes and Pharisees knew that a public call from Jesus to execute adulterers would make Him widely resented and feared.

The witnesses had to agree. If two witnesses gave conflicting testimony, then clearly one was not a true witness and the condition of having two witnesses was not met. This was the case in Jesus' unfair trial. "And some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" But not even then did their testimony agree" (Mark 14:57–59).

The main witnesses had to participate in the execution. "The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil person [perjurer] from among you" (Deuteronomy 17:7). A witness had to be so certain of the truthfulness of his testimony that he would be willing to take a leading role in the final assault on the accused. In this case they had to "cast the first stone." The equivalent of this in more modern times would be to require the eyewitnesses in a murder trial to participate in the firing squad—or the accused would be let go.

It should be clear by now that Jesus did not ignore or break the law when he said, "Neither do I condemn you" to the adulterous woman. All her accusers had gone, and since there were not two witnesses, she could not be convicted under Israelite law! But there are still some unresolved questions. For instance, while it is true that the witnesses lawfully had to "cast the first stone," the law said nothing about requiring them to be "without sin" themselves. Then why did Jesus say, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first"? And why would a group that Jesus rightly called "hypocrites" (Matthew 23:23) and a "generation of vipers" (Matthew 12:34, KJV) be so docile that they would walk away when confronted about their own sin?

Writing on the Ground

The answer lies in Jesus' mysterious actions just after He was asked if the woman should be condemned. "But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest [the chief witness] even to the last" (John 8:6–9).

What did Jesus begin to write in the dust of the temple floor? It was probably the sin of the eldest accuser. Because they were "an adulterous generation" and complete hypocrites, they all were at least as guilty as was the woman they accused. But since there were no witnesses against the accusers, Jesus forced them to witness against themselves. The eldest witness could see what Jesus was writing. He knew that if he picked up a stone, Jesus would expose *him*. It was his right—actually his obligation—to cast the first stone, but if he would not do so, he could not lawfully condemn the woman.

DID JESUS BREAK THE LAW?

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The Form AND the Power!

By Dan Hall

Soon we will face the common challenge of removing yeast, baking soda, baking powder, leavened products, and bread crumbs from our homes. But what utensils or tools do you use to deleaven your home? Do you use a knife, screwdriver and vacuum cleaner? Will you take a sponge to clean your walls? Some overzealous brethren have, in times past, gone to rather humorous extremes. What, specifically, will you use to clean the toaster? This repository “of all evil” sits prominently on our kitchen counters—defying the shakes, the slaps, and the strokes of a toothbrush. Yes, a toothbrush! Perhaps your toaster will have 30 percent fewer cavities this year. However, even the best of efforts leaves thousands of crumbs untouched inside this mechanical crumb scorcher. Have you tried a hose? I know of at least three brethren who use a garden hose! I am told it cleans very well. But, I know of three toasters (every year) that will not work normally again.

Perhaps all of us can share a laugh or two at the fanatical ways we, as new members, began keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread. Over time, these experiences have imparted wisdom and balance in God’s way. Because “a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm 111:10). Though a thorough detailed cleaning is a show

of zeal, we need not destroy our appliances, upholstery, or houses. But we do need to keep in mind God’s purpose for these days. The substance of these days is spiritual. This should be our focus, while not “leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23).

A Spiritual Feast

The Apostle Paul warned that in the end-time people would be self-absorbed and loving pleasures more than loving God. Paul continued, “having a form of godliness, but *denying* the power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:1–5). Have these days become a physical drudgery—just a form and ritual of the Church? What is the real emphasis of the Days of Unleavened Bread? Jesus answers this question: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Fathers is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). Therefore, God gave us His Feast to worship Him in spirit and in truth! The truth is God’s Feasts ARE SPIRITUAL. But, how are they spiritual?

First, they are divinely revealed. Moses, speaking of this fact, stated: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things

which are revealed belong to us and to our children *forever*, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29). Originally God gave His holy feast days to the ancient House of Israel (Exodus 12; Leviticus 23). Yet they never fully understood them. In addition to the exodus, the Bible records only three occasions where Israel kept the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (2 Chronicles 30, 35; Ezra 6:19–22). As a whole, Israel was never able to understand the “deep things of God” contained in His Feasts. They never understood God’s plan of salvation, because the Spirit of God was not made available to them. Their observance focussed on the physical—similar to the Pharisees of Christ’s day, who strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel (Matthew 23:24). Paul summarizes Israel’s understanding by stating: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God...” (Romans 10:3).

However, God’s spirit begotten sons *do understand* (1 Corinthians 2:10). The Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that ONLY God can form His righteousness—His character within us—if we truly hunger for it. We eat unleavened bread for seven days—picturing God’s righteousness that must come into us. Jesus said, “I am the living bread which came

down from heaven. If anyone eats of *this* bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (John 6:51). As God’s people, we should “feast” on Jesus Christ—the *living bread*, the Word that became flesh, and now is at the right hand of the Father. We must reaffirm our commitment to believe and obey *all* that Jesus Christ taught.

Focus on Putting in God’s Righteousness

Feasting on this bread would include profound study and meditation on the “weightier matters... justice, mercy, and faith” (Matthew 23:23). The purpose of which is to become Christ-like. Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice for sins. We are to become “living sacrifices” transformed by God’s Spirit to be God-willed versus self-willed. Jesus came in the form of a humble servant. We are to “let this mind” of humility and servant leadership come into us (Philippines 2:5). Christ has perfect judgment, limitless mercy, and powerful faith. We are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:18). “Sin” in the form of leavened products has been *put out* prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread. Though we may discover a piece of missed leavening during these days and remove it, the REAL emphasis is upon *putting in* God’s righteousness! God’s Feast is about *doing* God’s will! (James 1:22).

Yeast spores abundantly float around in the air. They are ubiquitous. As soon as you think that the home is de-leavened, hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of them enter your home through the door or window. Circulating in the air, some of these spores land on the end of your nose. With yeast so pervasive, is it possible to get it all out? In most cases, it would take a miracle to

attend to ever nook and crack where leaven may be hiding. The knowledge of the nature of leavening reveal an important spiritual lesson regarding sin. Without God’s help, we cannot save or cleanse ourselves from sin.

Apart from God, it is impossible to spiritually de-leaven our lives (Matthew 19:26). We need a powerful Savior and High Priest—Jesus Christ! The experience of preparing for the Days of Unleavened Bread

Are these members somehow less spiritual than the rest of us, who had the opportunity and cooperation to do a thorough spring-cleaning? Of course, not! These members can still observe the spiritual intent of these days—fully keeping God’s Feast! Why? It is because God looks at our heart and intent. He sees the zeal and sincerity of the member to trying to do the best he or she can. Therefore, by a submissive and obedient *atti-*

By His power, the true righteousness of God is being formed within us. “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

teaches many such lessons. We desperately need God’s help AND *His* righteousness! Therefore, upon baptism, God gives us the supernatural help we need—His Holy Spirit, to daily lay aside those sins that “so easily ensnare” (Hebrews 12:1) It is possible to strive against sin and *conquer it* through God’s help! (v. 4).

Help from God’s Spirit

God’s Holy Spirit “convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). It helps us root out “evil thoughts” that corrupt and befoul the mind. Because it is what comes out of the heart, Jesus said, that defiles us, not what goes into the stomach (Matthew 15:17-19). The *leavening* that God is *more* interested in is that which breaks the spirit and intent of His Spiritual Law. For example, members whose mates are non-members face an interesting predicament. Their mates may desire toast, doughnuts or other such leavened products in the home. They may even demand them or bring them into the house.

tude and intent—a willingness to obey—a member enters these days unleavened not having to worry about the contrary conduct of a non-member mate.

By His power, the true righteousness of God is being formed within us. “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Jesus Christ imparts the living faith to love God and love our neighbors. It is this divine love that fulfills the righteous requirement of all of God’s commandments and Feasts (Romans 13:8–10)! **What good would it do, if we perfectly cleaned our houses of physical leavening, yet enter the Holy Days harboring lust, resentment or bitterness?** Would we not be quenching the power of God’s Spirit and His mercy—*denying the power?* Certainly! Our worship would indeed be in vain.

Therefore, God’s Holy Days, which are spiritually revealed, teach us to worship our Father and His Son *by the living faith of Jesus Christ* (Galatians 2:20). Living faith is backed up by action, because faith

without works is dead (James 2:14–22). The Holy Days encourage us to think not only about love toward God, but also about love toward our neighbors. The focus is away from self.

The New Testament Example

How did the Apostolic Church keep the Days of Unleavened Bread? The Apostle Paul's experience with the Corinthian Church reveals the

on the spiritual meaning. We are commanded NOT to bring or allow *spiritual sins* into the House of God, which is the Church!

In addition, Paul describes spiritual unleavened bread as “sincerity and truth”. What does this mean? Paul explains this also: “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (v. 7).

True Christians are described as a “new lump” of unleavened bread.

True Christians are described as a “new lump” of unleavened bread. Jesus Christ, the living bread, is living within us by God’s Spirit.

insightful answer. Gross immorality and factions permeated this congregation. Some were disgusted by the open display of adultery—while other members condoned the conduct. Such a situation, if allowed to continue, would have divided, corrupted, and destroyed the entire congregation. Therefore, Paul addressed these “puffed up” attitudes: “Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

From the context, the Passover had been recently observed (v. 7). Perhaps by this time all of their homes were de-leavened. Yet Paul corrected them—showing the need to put sin out of their lives *and out of God’s House*. Therefore, notice another vital lesson. Not only should we remove physical leavening from our homes, but also the *emphasis is*

Jesus Christ, the Living Bread, is living within us by God’s Spirit. Therefore, we should walk in “newness of life”, with a spiritually unleavened attitude of righteousness, sincerity, and truth as *the unleavened children of God*. The Days of Unleavened Bread focuses on this aspect of our Christian walk.

Beware of This Leavening

Finally, Jesus Christ warned the disciples to avoid a specific leavening agent, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6–12).

The disciples, whose hearts were focused on physical things, concluded that Jesus was speaking of their failure to take bread on their trip across the Sea of Galilee (v. 7). However, Jesus was referring to the *leavening* of evil influence—the teachings and practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees (v. 12). Speaking of them, Jesus quoted the Prophet Isaiah: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the

commandments of men” (Mark 7:6–7).

The Pharisees and Sadducees solely viewed religion within the context of form and tradition. Jesus continued: “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do... All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (vv. 8–9). Jesus adamantly instructed His disciples, “...do not do according to their works,” which served only to clean the outside of a person and not the spiritual intent of the heart (Matthew 23:1–4, 25–28).

The Pharisees had the form, but denied the very Son of God. Shocking as it may sound, some of them denied the power of God’s Spirit working through Jesus Christ. Is it possible that we could wash feet, take the Passover symbols, remove leavening from our homes, and still be *leavened* inside our hearts and minds? Yes, it is!

Therefore, brethren, let us prepare now to keep God’s Feast by **emphasizing the real spiritual intent and purpose** of these days. You are the “unleavened bread”—picturing the keeping of these days in sincerity and truth—hungering and thirsting after God’s righteousness. It is well understood by God’s Church that seven is symbolic of perfection and completeness. Will not God complete and perfect what is lacking in us? Absolutely! Are there not two Holy Days, the First and the Seventh day? Does this relate to the fact that Jesus Christ is the “*author AND finisher* of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2)? Most certainly! Throughout our lives in God’s Church, we are promised His help—“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will *complete* it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). ☐

DID JESUS BREAK THE LAW?

(Continued From page 17)

Now, who was in the no-win situation? The scribes and Pharisees. The eldest accuser made a hasty exit, and as Jesus continued to write in the dust, so did the next, and the next, until all were gone. They did not leave because they had tender consciences. They left because they had guilty consciences.

“When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord’” (John 8:10–11). Without two or more witnesses she could not be convicted, so “Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you.’” It would have been *unlawful* for Him to do so.

The Woman’s Sin?

So far we have only dealt with the issue of the woman’s crime of adultery under Israelite law. But what about her spiritual sin? Did Jesus ignore that? It must be remembered that Jesus had the authority and power to forgive sins. There once was an incident in which Jesus was preaching to a packed house, and some men made a hole in the ceiling to let a man down to be healed. Jesus used the opportunity to assert His unique authority: “When Jesus saw their faith, He

said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’ But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise, take up your bed and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go your way to your house’” (Mark 2:5–11).

Without witnesses, it would have been unlawful for Jesus to condemn the woman for the civil crime of adultery, but it was within His authority to forgive her spiritual sin. Moments before, the woman had stood in the midst of a mob, in terror that she was about to be bludgeoned to death with stones. Now she was spared and tearfully facing her Savior. We can safely suppose that she was thoroughly repentant for what she had done. So Jesus, having dealt with her civil crime, dealt with her spiritual sin. He said, “Go and sin no more.”

In the incident of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus dealt with both her civil crime and her spiritual sin, and in doing so, He not only *meticulously observed the law*, He administered *elegant justice*. One such as this should judge the whole world! ☞

The Hebrew Calendar

(Continued From page 11)

year in the spring, while others started in the fall. Here, spring-to-spring reckoning and fall-to-fall reckoning refer to the way in which a king’s reign was counted. Judah and Israel at different times used both methods for figuring the reigns of kings. The different methods were used for different purposes as well; the religious year always began in the spring, but the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year were reckoned from the fall (Leviticus 25:8–9).

Did the author of Ezra-Nehemiah, traditionally one book in the Hebrew scriptures, use the spring-to-spring manner of reckoning? Or did he figure the king’s reign fall-to-fall? If he used a fall-to-fall system, Ezra’s arrival would be dated

in the late summer of 457BC. That would put the Messiah’s appearance in 27AD and the crucifixion in 31AD.

Can we know for sure which method of reckoning the Biblical author used? Can we determine whether the crucifixion took place in 30AD or 31AD? Absolutely!

Notice Nehemiah 1:1. Here is described news that Nehemiah received in the month Chislev (ninth month, corresponding to December) during the 20th year of Artaxerxes. Then in Nehemiah 2:1 we learn that the king noticed his sad countenance in the month Nisan (first month, corresponding to April) during the 20th year of Artaxerxes. Do you see the significance of this? In the following spring, four months after the news delivered in Nehemiah 1:1, the king was still in his 20th year! This conclusively proves that the author of

Ezra-Nehemiah used a fall-to-fall reckoning! If a spring-to-spring reckoning were used, then Nisan would have been counted as the beginning of the 21st year of the king’s reign.

Here is conclusive proof from the Bible that 457BC is the proper date to begin the count from the decree of Artaxerxes. This means that Christ was crucified in 31AD. The only way that the Passover of that year could come on a Wednesday, as the Gospel accounts clearly show that it did, was that the current rules of the calendar, including postponements, were used by the Sanhedrin during the time of Christ and the Apostolic Church. By accepting the current Jewish calendar as our standard, we are following the example of Jesus Christ, Himself, and that of the early Church! ☞

Filled With Christ*(Continued From page 2)*

said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of LITTLE FAITH, why did you doubt?’” (Matthew 14:27–31).

There are *several* lessons in this inspired account. As long as Peter was NOT watching television, NOT getting his mind on *this* world’s attitudes and approaches, he DID, in fact, walk on water! But as soon as Peter got his mind off Christ and began to consider the “around”—the things of *this world*—he began to sink.

But *does* God really want us to have enough FAITH to walk on water? Yes, He *really does!* For when Peter started to sink, Jesus immediately said, “Oh you of little faith, WHY did you doubt?”

Yes, it is *so easy* to get our minds off Jesus Christ and let them drift on to the things of this world, because this is *Satan’s* world. And Satan is *continually* “pumping out” his perverted propaganda—his perverted approach to life, which emphasizes “doing your own thing;” “Do not get too interested in God, it might make you unbalanced;” or “God is not fair;” “*You* need to decide what is right and wrong,” etc. These are the kinds of messages we constantly receive from “SBS”—Satan’s Broadcasting System.

Remember how the Apostle Paul warned us about walking “according to the course of this world according to the PRINCE of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:2–3). Satan is, indeed, the “prince” of this world (John 14:30, KJV). He and his rebellious fallen angels—now DEMONS—“work” continually to pull human beings down to their level. They constantly strive to impart *wrong attitudes* of hate, lust, selfishness and rebellion as they seek to prevent humans from joining the Kingdom of God and therefore ultimately becoming RULERS over them (1 Corinthians 6:3). In our own lives and in the lives of our children—who, with their childish minds, CANNOT understand fully—we have to be constantly on guard against this SATANIC warfare!

Brethren, if we are going to restore Apostolic Christianity, we must truly “come out” of this society—this modern Egypt and Babylon. This will make it possible for a more profound relationship to be built between each

of us and Jesus Christ our Living Head and Savior. This will help us draw *far closer* to our Father in heaven and be able to have the *living* FAITH we need to fully preach the Gospel and to do the Work in a way that honors Him.

If many of us continue to have one foot in the world and one foot in the Church, we CANNOT have the faith we need, because one of the greatest “destroyers” of faith is GUILT. And when you and I “compromise” ourselves with this world and with Satan, we are markedly decreasing our own faith and closeness to God!

The Apostle John was inspired to write: “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, *because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*” (1 John 3:21–22). But when our “heart” DOES condemn us—and often *for very good reason* when we compromise and “water down” our approach to God and His ways—then we, feeling this GUILT, obviously *do lack confidence in God*. Our FAITH in God has been damaged! That childlike attitude of complete TRUST in God our Father, in His laws, His ways and His promises has been “sabotaged” by our compromises with SIN.

Anytime we begin to “pull back” from God in ANY facet of our lives, this action undermines our faith. Some brethren compromise by watching WAY too much television or going to worldly movies—thus weakening their own defenses against all kinds of assaults by Satan. Some brethren then proceed to compromise in their fidelity to their mates and bring upon themselves and their mates untold grief and sorrow. Some compromise in the way they keep the Sabbath or Holy Days. Some even compromise by STEALING God’s tithes! (Malachi 3:8–10).

Whatever type of spiritual “compromise” *you* make, realize deeply that it is DEFINITELY going to undermine your *faith* and TRUST in God. For that trust must be based upon a *total reliance* on the fact that God is REAL, that His laws and ways are RIGHT, and that true Christians acknowledge this and—in *their hearts*—determine to put their trust *wholly in GOD!*

Brethren, we must BELIEVE the words of King David which God inspired to be placed in the Bible: “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their TRUST in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You” (Psalm 9:9–10). And again, “But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they TRUST in Him” (Psalm 37:39–40).

As we prepare to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread and to “come out of sin” physically—by removing leaven—so we must come OUT of this modern

Egyptian/Babylonian society which surrounds us. We need to guard our minds zealously. We need to constantly bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

It is vital that we all realize that every sin we commit, every spiritual compromise we make—all work to DESTROY the depth and joy of the close relationship we should have with Christ, and the profound TRUST we must have in God to make it through the years ahead. As the inspired Paul wrote about “compromises” with physical things such as food and drink: “Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts

is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; *for whatever is not from FAITH is SIN*” (Romans 14:22–23).

Dear brethren, let us strive and let us PRAY—and pray for one another—that we may grow to attain the level of absolute *faith* and TRUST in our God, which we must have! Then the Work of Christ through us will go forward with even greater POWER. And the promised “signs” (Mark 16:17–18) of casting out demons, healing the sick, and *other signs*, will be manifest, and more and more people will come to KNOW that there is a real God and that He still has *faithful* servants on this earth today.



How Satan CONFUSES People

(Continued From page 3)

if homosexuality bestiality, same-sex marriage and every other deviant behavior imaginable is condoned by the governments and the religions of this present world, it should make absolutely NO DIFFERENCE as to how we conduct ourselves!

Each of us should understand—and teach our children—that we are held to a *higher* standard. We are to genuinely reflect Jesus Christ in EVERYTHING we think, say and do. As this world, and most of its religions, dissolves into moral chaos, we who are members of the true body of Christ should be honored to have the opportunity even to suffer for His name. Remember the original Apostles? Though they had been severely *beaten* with rods or whips, the Apostles felt honored by this, “So they departed from the presence of the council, REJOICING that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

The early Apostles knew that God was real. They knew that His Word was inspired and that He—GOD—absolutely knows what is

best for us human beings. America’s “founding fathers” used to have FAR more regard for this truth than most of our modern politicians appear even to be able to imagine.

In an extremely insightful and brilliant book, Rabbi Daniel Lapin explains the parallel between the faithful leaders of ancient Israel and America’s founders:

Both ancient Israel and modern America came into being because their founders believed—no, they *knew*, beyond a shadow of a doubt—this misleadingly simple fact: Whatever we think about God is not nearly as important to know as what God thinks of us. Or to put it slightly more usefully, thinking about what we expect from God is not nearly as valuable as knowing what God expects of us.

To both Israel’s and America’s founders, the Bible was as vital for the safe operation of human society as any manufacturer’s instruction manual would be for the safe operation of a complex piece

of machinery. The only difference was that to those devout and pious Christians, the Bible was the Word of God. To the Jews, the Torah, or Five Books of Moses, was only part of the package. [*America’s Real War*, 1999, pp. 127–128].

Brethren, if we are to put our full TRUST in God, in the Word of God and in the *true values*, which our Creator clearly reveals through His Word, then we will really be walking in the footsteps of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of Peter, Paul, James and John. Let us make sure that neither we nor our children are ever apologetic for trying to hold fast to GOD’S standards—for we are in *mighty good company*!

Let us *all* so conduct ourselves that we may say to others, as did Joshua: “And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). ©

Prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles 2000

By Don Davis

Last year's Feast was the first for the Living Church of God, and virtually everyone who attended felt a renewed spirit of love and unity among the brethren.

One way that we remain close to our God is by gathering together each fall to celebrate our part in His plan, by looking forward to the establishment of God's government here on earth. Why does God give such emphasis to this milestone of His Holy Day calendar? How should we be preparing for this important time, and how should we observe it when it arrives?

We read in Leviticus: "...The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation..." (Leviticus 23:34-35).

Although only the first and last days are called "holy time," God says we should be at the Feast for all eight days: "For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation.... It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it" (Leviticus 23:36).

We leave our homes and travel, finding temporary accommodations during the Feast, for a very good reason. It is God's plan to teach us an important lesson, that we, like the Israelites, are merely sojourners here on earth. "You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of

the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 23:42-43).

God did not say that we do not have to attend if the site is too far away. In the Millennium, people will come to Jerusalem for the Feast from every nation. God has taught us to

heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household" (Deuteronomy 14:24-26).

It is our privilege and responsibility to fulfill God's admonition that all should: "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Yes, we are to "send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared." When you send your tithe-of-the-tithe and excess second tithe donations, you are not just helping to cover the cost of Feast halls; you are helping the Church provide assistance to needy brethren who might otherwise not be able to attend. Please remember to send your tithe-of-the-tithe as soon as possible.

U.S.A. Sites:

Anchorage, AK

Jackson Hole, WY

Kerrville, TX

Pigeon Forge, TN

Lake of the Ozarks, MO

Panama City, FL

San Diego, CA (by application only; application in May/June LCN)

Canada:

Cranbrook, BC,

Montreal, QC

Prince Edward Island

Mexico:

Metepec

Europe:

Portbail, France

keep aside a tithe for this purpose. "But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your

There will be a combined site for brethren from all the European countries, as well as for transfers from around the world.

Detailed information on locations and housing options, and on the other international sites, will be published in the May-June *Living Church News*, and on the Church Web site at www.livingcog.org (in the Member Services area), but for those who want to began making their plans, this summary information has been provided. ☐

What is Beauty?

By Rod McNair

If you are a young person, how should you feel about the way you look? How should you view beauty? How does God view caring for our appearance? To some, looking good becomes a competition. If someone is “beautiful,” they are assumed to have it made.

God appreciates beauty! In fact, He described Old Testament Israel as a young lady, dressed up and beautiful (Ezekiel 16:12–15). But, instead of trusting in God, Israel trusted in herself—in her own “beauty” (v. 15). What is the lesson? God does not condemn good looks, or trying to have good looks—He just does not want you to focus on it so much that your whole being and confidence is wrapped up in your looks or physique. God said your body is temporary—and your looks are temporary—so it is best not to worry overly much about it (Proverbs 20:29, 31:30).

Caring for our appearance is not wrong, but the **real emphasis** we should make is on developing a relationship with God—the adorning of the “hidden person of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4). What are some secrets to real beauty—outside and in, physically and spiritually?


What is one of the first things people see when they look at your face? Is it a frown, a scowl, a tired look? Or is it a cheerful, happy, radiant expression? It has been said that one of the easiest ways to improve your appearance is to just smile! But where does a happy, cheerful look come from? Obviously, it comes from a happy, cheerful outlook and attitude of heart. What you wear on your face is a direct result of what you think in your heart. Proverbs 23:7 says: “...For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” Matthew 12:34 says, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” In other words, it is a natural law that what people read on your *face* is a direct consequence of the condition of your *heart*. You are going to look your best if you have a smile on your face—and that comes from an attitude of heart.

God gave ancient Israel laws of hygiene, and instructed them on how to care for their living quarters, and their selves. That is another simple way to improve your looks—start making a habit of cleanliness of dress, and good hygiene. But is physical cleanliness all God is concerned about? God says to cultivate spiritual cleanliness. Using filthy language, or engaging in corrupt habits like cigarettes and drugs only detracts from a person’s attrac-

tiveness—it does not impress others at all. Do you keep your mind clean from wrong thoughts, lustful attitudes and corrupting influences? God says, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9–11). “Good, clean living,” both physical and spiritual, is a key to becoming a more beautiful person.

Another way to improve your looks is to simply eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, and get regular exercise. You will look better, and more importantly, you will feel better about your appearance. Bodily exercise profits—a little, or a little while (1 Timothy 4:8). But spiritual exercise has eternal results. Are you exercising your mind, to learn to discern the good from the bad? If you drink in all the world has to offer, you will be taking in a lot of poison. We need to be reading God’s Word—and exercising our mind and character by applying what we read—to be a spiritually fit and beautiful person, inside and out. “But solid food belongs to those of full age, *that* is those who have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

How well do you take care of your clothes? Do you always try to look your best? You do not need a big budget to take care of what you have, and your clothes do not always have to be new. As the youngest in my family, I got used to “hand-me-downs”—very rarely was I the first to wear them! But, did you know that you can get spiritual garments, custom made just for you? Not passed down, not “one size fits all”—these are individually tailored just for you, by God! “And to her (the Church) it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:8). On top of that, God says your “spiritual shoes” are your involvement in the Work (Ephesians 6:15), even as a young person.

Of course, God wants you to take care of your appearance. But He is looking for young men and women who are not obsessed by their physical looks. God is looking for future leaders in Tomorrow’s World. Those leaders will be developing lasting, inner beauty by monitoring their attitude, maintaining purity of mind, exercising righteousness, and getting involved in the Work! 

Local Church News

Food, Fun and Fellowship

The Little Rock congregation (which meets in Cabot, Arkansas) hosted a fun show on Saturday evening, February 5th (talent was welcome, but not required). After services, about 60 people enjoyed a dinner of soup and sandwiches. After the Sabbath, the “fun” began. We had an hour and a half of wide variety of entertainment. There were songs and dances, funny stories, and skits presented by performers ranging in age from twins, age one (prompted by mom, big brother and sister) to a couple of lovely songs sung acappella by 86-year-old Elsie Bruder. There were magic acts, some of which fell flat,

great stories, lovely poems and some enjoyable nonsense for everyone.

After the fun show, the evening was still young, so recorded dance music was played for the enjoyment of all. All the fellows had the opportunity to dance with Jessie Mach, who at age 90 did not miss a dance. Others played board games, while some just enjoyed the fellowship. Guests from the Russellville and Jonesboro congregations enjoyed the evening with their Little Rock brethren.

Winter can be bleak, but not with such memorable activities in our local congregations.

In Loving Memory

Mr. Nicholas Senkovs, 81, a faithful, long-standing member of God's Church, died on January 3 in hospital in Wellington, New Zealand. He had been a member since the mid-1970s, and with his wife Frieda (who died in 1986) set a wonderful example of hospitality and generosity to others. He worked as a cook. Mr. Senkovs affiliated with the Living Church of God in 1998. He was the only member in the Wellington region, a staunch supporter of Dr. Meredith's drive to powerfully preach the full gospel to the world.

Mr. Aaron Young, age 85, of Los Angeles, California died February 19. He was the oldest member of the Orange County Living Church of God congregation. Despite continuing health problems and failing eyesight, he diligently attended Sabbath services, driving over 60 miles in heavy traffic.

40th Anniversary

Irvin and Donna Woelfle of East Peoria, Illinois celebrated their 40th Anniversary. Mr. Roderick Meredith in San Diego married them on Feb. 20, 1960. They have three children: Joanne Fortner (husband Rod Fortner), Joyce Friesen (husband Dave Friesen) and Jill Lipscomb (husband Chan Lipscomb).

They have five grandchildren: Karla Friesen, Colin Friesen, Marissa Fortner, Andrea Fortner and Rebecca Fortner.

Births

Eric and Tricia Boyer are pleased to announce the birth of their second son, **Samuel Thierry**, born January 7, 2000 at 12:25 p.m. in Normandie, France. He weighed 8 pounds and was 21 inches long.

Bob and Joyce Thiel of Arroyo Grande, California announced the birth of their third son, **David Philip** on February 26. He weighed in at eight pounds, nine ounces and was 21 inches long.

Iain Ross Hazen, boy, born to James and Robin Hazen of Williamsburg, Virginia on February 8. Iain, their third son, weighed six pounds, nine ounces.

Michigan's Ski Weekend Becomes Highlight of Winter

By Carol Blanchard

The 5th Annual Winter Ski Weekend “was truly a mini-feast,” said Darlene Chornomaz, from New Jersey. The four-day event was held in Marquette, Michigan, from December 23 through December 26. Nearly 150 people came from across the North American continent to take part in the weekend.

“The unity of God’s people was phenomenal, the fellowship was uplifting and the weather was perfect,” said Bill Long, of Jackson, Mississippi.

Activities started with two enthusiastic games of broomball during the welcome reception on Thursday evening. Broomball is much like hockey; the major difference being that brooms and balls are used in the place of sticks and pucks. About 75 chilled participants tried their hand at this lively sport, while spectators huddled around a portable gas heater for warmth.

Skiing began on Friday after a short meeting and a prayer for safety. Church members filled the slopes of Marquette Mountain, skiing, snowboarding and socializing. For some

first-time skiers, the experience was eye opening. “I didn’t realize how wonderful the snow could be,” said Bryan Pape, a 21-year-old from Dresden, Ohio. “My eyes and heart have been changed.”

Dinner Friday evening was another first for most people in attendance. The brethren from the Upper Peninsula, called “Yoopers,” served a traditional Yooper dinner to usher in the Sabbath. People feasted on pasties and Mackinac Island Fudge ice cream. The meal was followed by a Bible study given by area pastor David Burson.

Saturday began with a young adult Bible study in the morning. For Sabbath services, Marquette host Jim Lounds delivered a sermonette on joy, and Mr. Burson gave a sermon on choices. After services, hymns were sung, led by Michael Blanchard and accompanied by Michael Thomas, giving participants an opportunity to sing for a spaghetti supper. The southern Michigan and Indiana brethren hosted the meal. The evening was whiled away with a dance. Dancers had the opportunity to win free ski passes and other prizes. A special

dance was set aside for two couples who were recently engaged. Younger children played games on the side. Both young and old broke balloons in the annual balloon stomp.

Upper Michigan minister John Blanchard gave a Bible study for non-skiing adults Sunday morning. Skiers stormed the mountain at 9:30 a.m., this time in much colder weather than before. Those who could handle the frigid temperature were rewarded with hot chocolate and an outdoor barbecue lunch. Non-skiers were brought up in the grooming machine to enjoy the picnic. The meal was prepared and eaten on the slopes in the midst of the falling snow.

The crowd began to break up after noon on Sunday, when some people reluctantly began the journey home. “I was sad to see the weekend end, but very happy that I was able to attend,” said Darlene Chornomaz. “I had an awesome time at the ski weekend,” exclaimed Marlin Bowman from Ontario, Canada. Betty Elder, from Indiana, said, “We had a great time. We really appreciate the chance to get together with the brethren from all over.”

Lafayette Square Dance a Hit

On January 22, the Lafayette, Louisiana, congregation hosted its annual Square Dance and Chili Cook. Over one hundred people from New Orleans to Gladewater, Texas attended a combined service in the afternoon.

Shortly after the service, the spiciest chili east of the Rio Grande was unveiled and consumed with gusto. For dessert, many members had baked cakes of a variety of shapes and sizes to be sold during the “Cake Auction.” Following the dinner, the bidding began with plenty of

good-natured competition for the delicious-looking cakes. The proceeds went to the local fund to finance a teen backpacking trip. The cakes went on the dessert table!

The square dance followed, with two hours of fun and laughter. The square-dance caller, who has organized the dancing year-after-year, said he loves to come back to this group—and does it at no charge. Fellowship continued on into the evening, until it was finally time to take all the colorful decorations down until next year’s annual Square Dance.

Commentary

Do You Have God's Protection?

By Richard F. Ames

A friend of mine fought in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. As a young American soldier, he and his comrades faced incoming artillery shells exploding all around them. My friend told me, "There were no atheists there that day. The men were trying to remember all their childhood prayers in that frightening attack."

Why is it that we, created in God's image, generally ignore our Creator until some tragedy or calamity strikes? Is it because many of us by nature are procrastinators?

Historically, God's servants have always urged the human family to seek God now—not to wait for a so-called deathbed repentance.

The apostle Paul told the Athenians: "Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but *now* commands all men everywhere to repent." You need to establish a relationship with the Creator and His Son, Jesus Christ, if you have not done so already. God promises guidance, blessings and protection for those who love Him, obey Him and serve him.

Notice this promise in the book of Psalms: "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." Yes, God will give divine protection to those who reverence Him. Read Psalm 91. God here also promises protection for those who trust in Him.

Today we face many dangers. Our children may be gunned down at their school; terrorist bombings threaten the normal routine of society; highway accidents bring grief to many thousands every year; wars and regional hostilities are also killing thousands every year!

Please understand. God allows Christians to suffer persecution and experience trials to test their faith, but He also gives spiritual strength and power to His children to endure and overcome!

We need not wait for such suffering before reforming our lives and submitting to the Creator of the Universe. Read your Bible. Respond now to the love and instructions of your Lord. As the prophet Isaiah urges us in Isaiah 55:6–7, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Now is the time to seek God's love. Pray to the Creator with all your heart—and if you are willing to truly serve Him and *obey* Him, then claim His promises of Divine protection!

This commentary can be found on the Church web page, www.livingcog.org, in the Commentary Library, along with many other commentaries on key topics facing our world.

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